

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTER
3-18 Nishi-Waseda 2-chome
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan

Cable Address: Japankyodan Tokyo

Telephone: 202-0541

No. 100

January 20, 1976

AISATSU
FROM
MODERATOR
ISUKE
TODA



The two mainstays of the Kyodan as it enters the New Year are its role in the course of history and the dialogue approach that recognizes the diversity of opinions. With these as our pillars, we want to move forward on behalf of those suffering from the inconsistencies in present society. Concretely, we will be pursuing, from the Asian perspective, the issues of Yasukuni Shrine nationalization, discrimination against outcast Japanese referred to as mikaiho buraku, and discrimination against Koreans in Japan.

There remain, of course, the problems that plague the revitalization of the Kyodan, but we will continue to work to resolve these through the process of dialogue.

We anticipate the convening of the 19th Kyodan General Assembly in the fall. I sincerely hope that both Tokyo and Osaka districts will be able to hold their assemblies so that we may have total representation at the General Assembly.

On the Occasion of KNL's 100th Issue...

Milan, Ohio

Congratulations on this 100th issue of the Kyodan News Letter. January '66 seems a long time ago and the past 10 years of life in this great church in Japan has proved that a great deal of history and life can be packed into a decade.

1966 in the Kyodan was the era of Misters - Suzuki, Ii, Saeki, Kimura, Omura and a host of others. Some issues on the horizon were

The Confession of Guilt in World War II,
Relationship with the Korean Church,
Merger with the United Church of Okinawa,
The Building of a Home for Atom Bomb victims in Hiroshima,
Kyodan participation in the Fair at Osaka
to name only a few.

One day as a group of these gentlemen were discussing the Kyodan and its image overseas - Mr. Omura, then moderator, said, "Mr. Bell, when you and other missionaries write home - how do you describe us?" A rather provoking question. I answered with a question, "Do you not think it's about time

for you tell the world about you?"

Mr. Ken Saeki and I were given the responsibility to draw up a plan and present it to the church. And so a child was born.

The response, especially from South East Asia Churches and the churches in Europe, was very gratifying and this response was really what made the Kyodan News Letter a permanent vehicle to present itself to the world Community.

The Kyodan has a gift for the world - the proclamation that 'Jesus is Lord;' please continue to share this gift.

Peace,

Otis W. Bell

Tokyo

The news that ten years have passed since the Kyodan News Letter was started in 1966 and that this will be the 100th issue comes as a "shock."

I think that the pain and confusion experienced by the Kyodan during the last 10 years are well known to various churches around the

world that share our faith in Jesus Christ. The fact that during that period the Kyodan News Letter continued to provide a place for "ecumenical conversation" is due to the efforts of all the KNL staff and to the guidance of Him who is Lord of the Church.

One night during St. Paul's first evangelistic visit to Corinth, amid the stormy winds of persecution, he heard the voice of Christ say,

Have no fear: go on with your preaching and do not be silenced, for I am with you and no one shall attempt to do you harm; and there are many in this city who are my people. (NEB)

I hope that in the future, no matter what conditions prevail, those responsible for the KNL will not be silent but will continue to speak out. I, with all KNL readers, pray for their health and continuing service.

Isamu Omura
Kyodan Moderator, 1962-66

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIFTH ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

as caught from three Kyodan delegates:

- a) the Rev. Ichiro Ono, pastor, Heian Church, Kyoto; vice moderator of the Kyodan
- b) Mrs. Michiko Okuda, member, Yoga Church, Tokyo; chairperson of KNL editorial committee; elected to membership of WCC Central Committee
- c) the Rev. Tokunaga, Goro, pastor, Josai Church, Tokyo; chairperson of the Committee on Social Concerns

* * * * *

On the deepest impression from the experience

Ono I was deeply impressed by the contact with representatives from churches in so many countries throughout the world and the many new friends I made, with whom, in various ways, we will be continuing to take up the problems faced by the church in Japan as well as those faced by churches in other parts of the world. Among the problems these churches confront, I found that one of the main ones is the relationship between church and state. If the church is to be what it should be and is to fulfill Christ's mission in the world, it must transcend, must go beyond, the nation or state.

There are instances in which the church, which should be the "church of Christ" in a country, is beset by limitations that make it, in actuality, the "church of the state." Yet I found church leaders everywhere sincerely involved in the painful, agonizing, struggle to become free of these restrictions or limitations--to be the church that Christ wants it to be--the church that is the body of Christ in the world. We should recognize the struggle that each church is engaged in its own place, give ourselves fully to seeking to become the church that Christ wants us to be where we are, meanwhile, supporting one another in our respective struggles.

Okuda The thing that made the deepest impression on me was the diversity among Christians; for instance in the different ways of expressing one's faith... the joyous kind of Christianity expressed by the independent churches of Africa (who are new members of the WCC)... the music based on traditional African melodies and indigenous culture that exudes praise and thanks for freedom after years of colonial rule... the formal liturgy and eucharist of the Greek Orthodox Church... the hymns written and sung by guitar-playing young Germans. For the first time I realized there is something good too in the quiet, sermon-centered, Biblically-based worship of the Japanese church. Each has some meaning.

On the significance of world meetings

Tokunaga At a world conference of this kind, there is a gap between the extent to which you are doing what you should be doing in your own setting, and what is being discussed there. If you haven't first struggled with the issues in your own setting, going to a meeting like this has no meaning, and the real problems that exist in the various countries won't come up. The meeting will be purely superficial. Conversely, such world meetings have meaning to the extent that the participants have been involved in the struggles within their own countries.

When the representatives of some countries all said the same thing whenever they spoke, we realized the limitations placed upon them by their governments. Some of us come from countries where we have more freedom. Yet we cannot really say that we too are not shaped by the policies and framework of our government's policies.

The people who attend a meeting like this are apt to be chosen because they can speak English rather than because they are involved in the struggles and know the facts of their own country. That is, they may know English but they may not be in the best position to represent the situations in their own countries--for instance, the negative effects of modernization. If the WCC is not able to solve the problem of letting people express themselves in their own languages (not just in the official languages of the WCC, which in this case were English, French, German, Spanish and Russian), the real problems of the various countries won't come out.

GAINING

A

NEW

PERSPECTIVE

The Rev. Atsuo Jinnouchi, pastor of Ube Midoribashi Church in Yamaguchi prefecture, was one of six pastors who participated in a 3-month course (September through November 1975) at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, designed specifically for Japanese-speaking pastors in cooperation with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. (See KNL No. 96, Sept. 1975) Jinnouchi evaluates his experience in the comments below.

The instruction in counselling was given in the form of special lectures organized especially for us Japanese pastors, under the leadership of the energetic Dr. Theron Nease, a very able young professor, and interpreted by the Rev. Tatsunosuke Kokubo, one of our group.

As this was my first trip to the United States, along with my studies at the seminary I was very interested in learning about various aspects of American life--the extent to which the history, culture and religion of the United States have created today's society; what conditions have been born from the painful experiences of Vietnam and Watergate; what is happening in race relations. My knowledge of all these things was deepened in even just those three months. Reading Yamazaki Masakazu's book, Itamiagari no America (America on the road to recovery) helped my understanding.

In Atlanta I was able to attend Sunday worship services at a Japanese-American church as well as at Baptist, United Methodist and PCUS churches. I visited as many churches as possible but regret it was not possible due to a lack of time to take part fully in the continuing program of one church.

On the other hand, all of us were given opportunities to lecture or preach at the seminary and at one church or another, and these proved to be a meaningful means of exchange. I wonder if this method could not be used in the future to good advantage.

In addition, I was impressed by the fact that the churches there expressed a feeling of "having been made humble" rather than showing "super self-confidence."

During my stay I was very happy to have opportunities to meet and have fellowship with many people, in the seminary and in the churches, in the community and on trips. They were very cordial and friendly--perhaps an example of the well-known "Southern hospitality."

The three month's observation in America provided valuable experiences that I could not have gained over many years in Japan.

Even so, throughout my visit, the present situation of Japan and the problems of the Kyodan were on my mind. From now on I will be forced to analyze the evangelistic mission in Japan from a new perspective. Finally, I hope such an opportunity for continuing education will be made available to many pastors.

* * * * *

MINISTERIAL EXAM ISSUE REMAINS SNARLED

Unable to agree on the basis for conducting qualifying examinations for ministerial candidates, members of the Commission on Ministerial Qualifications declared the commission's activities "frozen," at the conclusion of their December 8-9 meeting, the sixth since the new commission was constituted in July.

The commission is committed to the principle that all members must agree to a position before it can be adopted, which gives extra-ordinary power to minority opinion.

Upon hearing the situation, the Moderator called for a one-day extension of the

Executive Committee meeting set for February 23-24 to deal with the statement prepared by a sub-committee of the commission.

The commission is hung up on:

1. The interpretation of the Executive Committee's action of April 14-15 approving the report of the previous Commission on Ministerial Qualifications and recommending the ordination or licensing of candidates who had passed the previous examination: a) Should this be seen as a first reconciliatory step toward resuming the examinations: or b) Should it be interpreted as an action taken only because it was impossible to give a proper examination? (continued on next page)

2. The function of the Kyodan Confession of Faith and Constitution and Bylaws with regard to the examination: a) Is the examination merely an "ecclesiastical" examination? or b) Does it involve adherence to the Confession of Faith and rules of the church? Some feel the Confession and Constitution must be the basis of the examination; others insist that allowance be made to display the full richness of the Confession.

SEEKING MISSIONARY FOR PONAPE

A pastor with agricultural skills is being sought for a missionary assignment on the Island of Ponape by the Ecumenical Ministries Committee in response to a request from the United Church of Ponape.

At its January 13-14 meeting the committee re-affirmed its desire to send such a worker, based on the intent of the Confession of War Responsibility and the desire to seek reconciliation with the people of Ponape, who were under the authority of

the Japanese military during World War II.

Among other matters discussed were the broad policies on sending missionaries and relationships with churches to which Kyodan personnel are related.

Present in addition to former and new committee members were the Rev. and Mrs. Tadashi Mitsui and their daughter, formerly of Lesotho (South West Africa), now of Geneva, Switzerland; the Rev. Masahiko Sawa, on furlough from Korea; General Secretary John Nakajima of the National Christian Council.

Nakajima reported on the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. He noted the evidence of an African identity and a Latin American identity but said an Asian identity has not yet emerged. Nakajima declared the Japanese church must become involved in the pain and struggle of the nations of Asia, many of which are being exploited by Japan and the developed nations of the West.

S T A T I S T I C S - April 1974 through March 1975

Total number of churches	1,658
Number of active churches	1,602
Established churches	1,332
Preaching points	270

There was a net increase of 5 churches, with several preaching points becoming established churches. Preaching points usually have less than 20 members and are not self supporting.

Total number of members*	194,303
Number of active adult members*	125,541
Resident	95,187
Nonresident	30,354

The total number of active members showed a slight increase, from 125,342 to 125,521.

Average Sunday attendance at worship	45,479
---	--------

Attendance at Sunday worship showed the first increase since 1967; attendance at prayer meetings, Bible study and Sunday school was also up, but attendance at Sunday evening services continued to decline.

Number of church schools*	1,420
Number of church school pupils*	108,510

While the number of baptisms was the largest since 1970, the occurrence of two Easters in the period covered was a contributing factor.

Baptisms April 1974-March 1975*	3,835
Adults	3,407
Children	428

The number of pastors declined by 158 but 120 were pastors without assignment whose names were removed when the records were updated.

Total number of pastors	2,609
Number of pastors serving churches	1,731
Ordained	1,414
Licensed	317

Regular offerings increased 22%.

Regular offerings*(in millions of ¥)	2,871
--------------------------------------	-------

**The statistics for 128 active churches are not included in the detailed figures because these churches have not provided up-to-date statistics for at least 3 years.*

25% of the Kyodan churches have less than 21 members
58% of the Kyodan churches have less than 51 members
17% of the Kyodan churches have more than 100 members

96% of the Kyodan churches average 100 or less at Sunday worship
65% of the Kyodan churches average 30 or less at Sunday worship
4% of the Kyodan churches average more than 100 at Sunday worship